

TITLE	Community Governance Review for Wokingham Town Council and Wokingham Without Parish Council
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 18 February 2016
WARDS	Emmbrook, Evendons ,Norreys, Wescott, Wokingham Without
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Head of Governance and Improvement Services
LEAD MEMBER	Pauline Jorgensen, Executive Member for Resident Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Conducting the Review will ensure that Wokingham Town Council can continue to provide effective and convenient governance which reflects the identities and interests of both new and existing communities.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council agree the following:

- 1) that a Community Governance Review (CGR) is initiated;
- 2) the proposed Terms of Reference (TOR), as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report recommends the initiation of a CGR and approval of the proposed TOR. The Review will cover the following requests from Wokingham Town Council:

- 1) To modify the existing Town Council boundary to encompass the whole of the South Wokingham SDL;
- 2) To adjust the allocation of seats in Wokingham Town Council wards to reflect population changes as a result of development.

Background

The Council is undertaking a Community Governance Review following a request from Wokingham Town Council, to modify the existing parish boundary so that it includes all of the South Wokingham SDL development. This includes the part that currently lies within the Wokingham Without parish.

The Town Council has also requested that the number of seats allocated to each ward is reviewed to take account of the projected increase in population, which is also driven by development in the North Wokingham SDL.

Analysis of Issues

The new development within the South Wokingham SDL is continuous with existing development within Wokingham Town, and it is felt that new residents will naturally consider themselves as an integral part of the Town, and make use of the facilities and services it provides.

It is important that electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish council area in which they are resident. The inclusion of the whole of the new development within the Wokingham Town Council area will engender a sense of identity and community, and lend strength and legitimacy to the parish structure.

The review of the current allocation of councillors within Wokingham Town Council will seek to ensure that there are no significant differences in levels of representation between different wards due to the increased population. There are no plans to increase the overall number of councillors above the current number of 25.

Any agreed geographic changes to the boundary between Wokingham Town and Wokingham Without will take place as soon as possible following the consultation.

Any agreed changes to the allocation of councillors to Wokingham Town Council wards will take effect at the next scheduled elections in 2019, so no additional election costs will be incurred by local tax payers.

Full details can be found in the Terms of Reference for the review which are attached at Appendix 1.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0		Revenue

Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
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n/a

Cross-Council Implications

n/a

List of Background Papers

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 The LGBCE Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (March 2010)

Contact Des Robinson	Service Governance and Improvement
Telephone No 0118 908 8317	Email des.robinson@wokingham.gov.uk
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